# ARCHIVAL MATERIAL AND HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY

Ralph E. Ehrenberg (Ed.), *Pattern and Process: Research in Historical Geography*. Howard University Press, for the National Archives Trust Fund Board, Washington D.C. (National Archives Conference, Volume 9), 1975. xv+360pp. $US15.00 ISBN 0-88258-050-7

Reviewed by Douglas Bishop

Like the work recently reviewed in these pages by E. W. Russell[1] this volume is part of the U.S. National Archives Conference series, in this case Volume Nine. Also like that work it is something of a modern antique, this conference having taken place some five years ago, in November 1971. However, unlike Mr Russell I found this book to be interesting and of worth in both an archival and geographical sense —despite certain reservations—primarily from its careful listing of the archival source material available and the excellent samples of the uses to which this material may be put.

Most contributors, by a carefully disciplined methodology and rigid adherence to the primacy of source material manage to avoid the pitfalls which lead many writers in the social sciences to erect fanciful and phantastic works of much ingenuity and speculative erudition but with little basis in fact and less use in practice. None the less I found A. H. Clark's detailed examination of the word *archives* too reminiscent of tedious exigeses of archival history at several seminars which I have per force attended.

The papers cover a broad spectrum, ranging from exploration to vegetation analysis, population studies, and one splendid restatement by H. B. Johnson of the philosophical as well as the practical bases of the Enlightenment as expressed through land settlement ordinances.

Apart from a Foreward, a Preface, an Introduction, an Introductory Section entitled 'Research on the Historical Geography of the United States', a Rogues Gallery, here entitled 'Biographical Sketches', two appendices and a good index, the work consists of papers divided into four sections each of which ends with a discussion summary apparently included to give verisimilitude to the conference format, for there can be no other valid reason for including such précised comments. Each paper includes useful notes whilst several include maps, illustrations and tables. One paper in each section examines the available source material, the others contain studies based on the archives.

Two papers comprise the first section 'Afro-American Population', the first a detailed analysis of the negro population of New Jersey, based on census records; the second a study of sources in the National Archives for population growth and movement. Both contributors include some rather disarming references, such as '. . . several thousand black men were among the colonial patriots who battled the British for the independence of their adopted land', or, 'The latter [family papers] exist for many white slaveowners but unfortunately, few Blacks

have deposited their family papers in the archives'. Also R. L. Clarke manages to confuse the British Isles, where ten thousand slaves had already been freed consequent upon Lord Mansfield's ruling in the case brought forward by the abolitionist Granville Sharp concerning the runaway slave James Somerset, with the West Indies where slavery lasted well into the Nineteenth Century.[2]

The five papers comprising the section 'Exploration, Surveying and Mapping' form a high point in the book. I found it particularly interesting to compare the work of the surveyor De Brahm in East Florida in the years immediately before the Revolution, with the almost contemporary work of Bodega, Malaspina and others in the North West coasts of the North American Continent for the Spanish Crown[3]. In both cases mapping and scientific observations of a high order were undertaken in renewed efforts of exploration and assessment of either newly-ceded areas in the case of the United Kingdom or areas previously regarded as marginal in the case of Spain. The records of these expeditions now form valuable collections in the U.S. National Archives and the Naval Museum in Madrid. The other articles in this section as well as drawing attention to the richness of the map collection of the National Archives, the philosophical basis of the rectilinear land surveys in the U.S.A., and its subsequent powerful influence on the landscape, also emphasise the varied interests and skills of the early leaders of the United States and enhance their status as children of the Enlightenment; indeed compared with some of the posturing dwarfs of Australian Federation they almost attain the gigantic stature which they are accorded in American mythology. The particular efforts of Jefferson and Washington have done much to provide latter-day historical geographers with reliable source material.[4]

Having escaped the commercial classes more by good luck than by good management, I would like to pass straight over section three, 'Transport, Commerce and Industry', but realise that even in our mixed economy a drooping private sector needs stimulating, and that where the private sector is rampant its ramifications must be carefully probed. Despite an excellent article by M. H. Fishbein on 'Selected Materials in the National Archives Relating to Commerce and Industry', my attention was seized by the *chef d'ouvre* of Messrs Jakle and Janiskee, 'Why Covered Bridges? Towards the Management of Historic Landscapes—The Case of Parke County, Indiana'. However, more of this later.

The fourth and last section is entitled 'Rural and Urban Settlement', again comprising some fine articles and of as much interest if not quite so much value, in my opinion, as section two. In the first paper, H. Roy Merrens draws attention to the scant regard paid to the colonial period in the conference. Indeed it is lucky to get a mention at all, as my *Speeches and Documents in American History 1776-1939* (Oxford University Press, reprinted 1956) chooses, as its title suggests, to pretend that nothing happened prior to 1776. Almost the only serious writer on the colonial settlement whose work is available in this country is Charles M. Andrews whose *Our Earliest Colonial Settlements,* originally published in 1933 and certainly available some years ago, forms an invaluable background to this period. T. G. Jordan's analysis

of 'Vegetation Perception and Choice of Settlement Site in Frontier Texas' is one of the many works attacking the validity of the 'Turner thesis' (as it was called in my American History lectures). Jordan uses records to show that in Texas vegetation passes in transition from Forest to Prairie, the 'favoured' and 'disfavoured' areas of settlement according to Turner. All one can say is surprise! surprise! I am sure the evidence is good and the methodology exact, but to my mind the 'Turner thesis' is as overblown in American History as analysis of Irish participation in the Eureka Stockade is in ours (Yes, I'm partly Irish). The remaining articles in this section—the last, on 'Bonanza Towns' beautifully illustrated by contemporary maps and pictures—form an interesting comparison with land settlement records held in the Public Record Office of Victoria. Whilst I cannot claim to know those records so well as Mr Keith Patterson and Miss Judith Cordingley whose work, whilst well known to archivists and researchers, is not so well known as it deserves, I have nevertheless used these records enough to be able to compare them with those created in the United States. In both cases the records form an invaluable research collection.

Whatever else may be its virtues, this volume will remain a fruitful and fruity field for linguistic dilettantes and amateur jargonoligists such as myself. The book is well-studded with such pieces as 'mid-continental macro-architecture' (p.136) or 'scatteration' (p.125), but in their article on the Management of Historical Landscapes, Messrs Jakle and Janiskee have produced a truly bravura display of jargon. Whilst they write persuasively for the preservation of 'relic landscapes', they might perhaps give some thought to the preservation of 'relic English'. One of their best efforts occurs in pp.197-98: 'By user-perception research, we mean empirical studies directed towards a more complete understanding of the ways in which people comprehend (cognitively structure or "perceive") the landscape and its components.' All this is really in the interests of preserving covered bridges as a local money-spinner through tourism. In Appendix A, Ralph E. Ehrenberg laments that American geographers still await their Albert Demangeon who analysed the Archives Nationales for French geographers. It would indeed be a pity if they were instead to meet their Armageddon weighted down with a turgid prosody which hides their meaning to all but the most obtuse. If this book forms any fair sample they deserve a better fate than that.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. *Archives and Manuscripts,* Vol. 6, No. 7, August 1976, pp.303-06.
2. See Oliver Ransford, *The Slave Trade,* Readers Union 1972.
3. See F. Vasquez Maure, 'Spaniards on the Canadian Pacific Coast' in *Geographical Magazine,* Vol. XLVII, No. 12, Sept. 1975.
4. See also J. B. Harley. 'George Washington, Map Maker' in *Geographical Magazine,* Vol. XLVIII, No. 10, July 1976.

# HISTORIES OF NEGLECT

Jane F. Smith and Robert M. Kvasnicka (Eds.), *Indian-White Relations: A Persistent Paradox*. Howard University Press, for the National Archives Trust Fund Board, Washington D.C. (National Archives Conferences Volume 10), 1976. xxii+278pp.

Reviewed by James Urry

This volume contains the papers and proceedings of the National Archives Conference on Research in the History of Indian-white Relations held in 1972 and sponsored by the National Archives and Records Service in the U.S.A. In recent years in America many minority groups have been the subject of renewed interest among scholars and among the public as their position and status in society has increased. Among the public the American Indian has regained some of that concept of the 'noble savage' once held by the Enlightenment philosophers, while among scholars the role of the Indian in the history of the country has been more keenly appreciated. This volume reflects these concerns and cleverly links accounts of archival sources with specific papers on important themes which illustrate the value and relevance of the source material of an earlier age.

In Australia the study of Aboriginal-white relations has, until recent years, been subject to gross neglect. Aborigines were studied by anthropologists most of whom had no sense of history, possessed little knowledge of archival sources and were rarely interested in the problems of the divide between Aboriginal culture and the wider white society. The image of the traditional native isolated in time and space is, unfortunately, still commonplace in Australian anthropology. It has been left to historians and others (especially Professor Rowley) to reveal the sad and often shocking tale of Aboriginal-white relations that persisted, and indeed still persist, in many parts of Australia.

This volume shows the kind of research and work which can be done using historical sources into the relationships between a minority and a dominant race when active encouragement from government institutions is translated into constructive action. It will be, alas, many years before anything is done in Australia by a government to promote such studies or to create the necessary library and archival services to implement such a policy. Australian archival services at the federal and at the state level are inadequate not only with regard to Aboriginal material but in many other fields. But considering the history of certain government policies toward Aborigines perhaps one can understand the general reluctance of officials to promote a close investigation of the recent past. However, it is not just government sources which illustrate so clearly the pathetic story of Aboriginal-white relations in Australia; as this volume on America points out, much can be discovered in private papers, in mission records and through a sustained programme of recording oral history. Many aborigines still living can remember the first contacts their people had with whites, while others have clear and bitter recollections of the slaughter of their close relatives. More of this material should be collected and funds set aside for a proper archive of oral history. The one figure who is so sadly

lacking from current historical accounts of Aboriginal-white relations, is the Aborigine himself.

This book is most revealing in many ways. On the one hand it shows what can be achieved by the study of past relationships between Indians and whites and on the other it shows how an understanding of the past can help shape policies for the future. One of the final chapters is written by the Commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs on current policies. Australian government policies toward Aborigines until quite recently clearly resembled American government policies toward Indians which were tried, and abandoned as unsatisfactory, nearly a century ago! In the 1930s the American government was debating the complex issue of, among other things, the problems of land rights for Indians, and these debates are clearly outlined in this book. It is sad that what belongs to history in America should be a current issue in Australia today, and it is depressing to see that Australian government thinking appears to be even more backward than the most reactionary ideas of American Congressmen forty years ago.

## THOUGHTS PROMPTED BY A SERIES OF FINDING AIDS

A review by Michael Saclier

In September 1975 I visited the National Library of Australia in company with Peter Walne who was then visiting Canberra, and Michael Piggott very kindly showed us over the Manuscripts Section. In the course of the conversation I became aware for the first time of the series of detailed Guides to its major collections which the Library has been publishing for many years. My ignorance of the Guides is of course merely evidence of one of the gaps in my professional knowledge, but since others also shared that ignorance, I suggested to our esteemed Editor that the publications might be reviewed in order to bring them to the notice of the Society's members and other readers of *Archives and Manuscripts* who might share this lack of knowledge. To this he agreed.

Unfortunately, it came about after a lapse of some considerable time that our Editor could find no one able and willing to carry out the task, so he came back to me and I find myself hoist with my own petard so to speak. Having got myself into this situation, however, I now propose to do something a little different from a straight review or note, since I feel that the publications pose some interesting questions which should at least be raised and looked at, though I have no illusions that I shall be able to provide many answers.

To begin with, however, I should start by describing the Guides. There are about 150 of them each entitled (*mutatis mutandis*) 'Sir Joseph Banks/A Guide to his Papers/in the/National Library of Australia'. Of the sample of thirteen received, the earliest is that to the 'Banks papers' (I shall explain the quotes later) published in 1963, the

latest the guide to the papers of Judah Waten published in 1976. There is a shift in form and methodology between the Banks guide and the rest of the sample and a description of it and of the general later format will suffice.

Duplicated on quarto paper, the Banks guide consists of a 19-page detailed descriptive list or calendar of 142 documents, plus an addendum describing one further letter. Each item except the addendum bears an alphabetical or alphanumeric location symbol: NK [number] standing for Nan Kivell collection, EAP for E. A. Petherick collection, and SO9 for a purchase from Sotherby.

No explanation is given of these symbols. The list is alphabetically arranged by author.

The remaining twelve guides are duplicated on A4 paper. They consist of a title page (and from 1974 on a heavy paper cover and backing sheet, the cover duplicating the title page), standard cataloguing details, a table of contents, a Scope and Content Note, a Biographical Note, a Series List, a Series Description, a Name Index to Correspondence, and (sometimes) various appendices.

The Scope and Content note describes the provenance of the collection and the general contents and gives such information as the date range, quantity in shelf feet or metres, the N.L.A. MS accession number and the access conditions. The Series List is simply a list of series titles and the Series Description is exactly what it says, a description of each series, although it gives no indication of quantity nor of the number of items in each series. The Name Index to Correspondence distinguishes between letters addressed to the person indexed and those written by him or her to the person whose papers are being indexed by underlining the name of the author.

Having said so much one has reached the limit of useful description and must turn to assessment and (as indicated at the outset) to a consideration of some of the more basic questions surrounding the finding-aid area. In doing so, I do not want to enter into a detailed discussion of Graham Powell's article 'Archival Principles and the treatment of Personal Papers' which appeared in the last issue of this journal.[1] Others better versed than I am in the literature and theory of the questions raised there will no doubt be doing that. Nevertheless, one or two general points in Mr Powell's article are necessarily involved in this particular exercise and I hope that readers will excuse me for trespassing on their patience to that extent.

The first of these points is the question of *respect des fonds* which Mr Powell deals with at the outset of his article.[2]

> In the nineteenth century [he writes] librarians, historians and others who arranged collections of papers frequently treated each item as a discrete entity and items from many collections were brought together on the basis of their common subject, period or locality . . . Nevertheless . . . it is a long time since large manuscript repositories committed this offence and nearly all manuscript librarians accept without qualification the principle of *respect des fonds*.[3]

It is very good to hear that this is the case. One could, however, be excused for expressing the hope that the National Library of Australia will soon be able to adopt *respect des fonds* as one of its guiding

principles. Of the twelve later Guides received, five[4] are revealed by the Scope and Content Note to be artificial collections part of each of which would be accurately described by the general title ('. . . A Guide to His Papers') but inextricably mixed with the papers of friends, relatives, secretaries and correspondents; that is, the Library has regarded the authorship or one-time ownership of papers by the Important Person concerned as a 'common subject', has treated each item as a discrete entity and brought together items from many collections on that basis.

In the case of the Banks Papers, the documentation available is much less revealing. Fairly clearly from the fact that three collections of papers are cited (Petherick, Nan Kivell and a Sotherby purchase) the listing is an artificial one. Only the Nan Kivell items are traceable in the *Guide to Collections of Manuscripts in Australian Libraries* and it is impossible to tell whether the papers by or to Banks in the Petherick and Sotherby collections are gathered together in MS9 (described on sheet A192 of the *Guide to Collections*) but since neither collection appears in that publication the likelihood seems high. Conclusion: more *respect* is due to the *fonds* donated by rich and generous benefactors than to those purchased at auction.[5]

The second point which must be touched upon is that of calendaring and indexing (whether by personal name or subject). In his consideration of this question, Mr Powell writes

> It would be impossible for a large archives to index every letter in every file, even if it was desirable, but it is possible for many manuscript repositories to index all their letters . . . It is quite common for a large collection of personal papers to contain material on such varied subjects as religion and foreign policy, music and trade unions, law and cricket, pensions and broadcasting. Even if a historian knows something about a person's career and interests, he will find it hard to predict the subject matter of the papers or the range of correspondents. It would be unreasonable to expect the biographer of Boldrewood to work through the papers of Symon, a politician and lawyer, in the hope that they corresponded and, even if he did, it would probably be a long time before he found the single letter. Therefore it is possible and desirable that finding-aids be compiled which not only describe the papers collectively but enable the historian to locate single items relevant to his research . . . Librarians have often reported that the most common request of historians is for letters written by particular people; for example, Berner has asserted that perhaps 90 per cent of user requests for access to papers is by the users linkage of proper names to the subjects of their interest. The name index to correspondence is the finding-aid which historians regard as essential for personal papers . . . unless most of the large collections of personal papers in a repository can be indexed by name they will be neglected or overlooked by historians . . . In fact, it could be argued that libraries that have no hope of obtaining the staff needed to index at least some of their collections should vacate the field of manuscript-collecting.[6]

Mr Powell points out that the creation of calendars requires 'exceptional historical knowledge and abstracting skill',[7] and is extremely time consuming, though I am fairly certain that in exceptional circumstances, even the National Library might still resort to a calendar or quasi-calendar form at times, as does my own archives. He goes on to say that 'Subject indexes are more useful, but as a single letter may deal with a dozen subjects they are also very time consuming.

It is generally sufficient if inventories contain descriptions of the principal or recurring subjects covered in the papers, especially if series have been established on an activity or subject basis.'[8]

On the whole, I am left with the impression that the proper name index to correspondence is used by the National Library because it does not have the resources to carry out subject indexing. If this were stated, I would not object in the least, but in this section, Mr. Powell goes to considerable lengths to rationalise the practice in terms of the needs and wishes of the users of manuscript libraries. This I find frankly unconvincing.

The most widely voiced criticism of the *Guide to Collections* is, and as far as I am aware always has been, the fact that it contains no subject index. This was as far as I can remember the dominant theme of the report of the meeting on the *Guide* held in Canberra in March 1972 (of which I do not now have a copy) and is mentioned in a letter to contributing institutions from the then National Librarian Mr Fleming dated 20 October 1971, seeking suggestions for improvements. And what is applicable to the larger more general publication is, in my view, applicable to the smaller more particular ones. Even Mr Powell makes a sidelong acknowledgement of this when he writes that 'most historians are primarily concerned with a subject' and that 'unless a historian is a biographer he is unlikely to have time to work right through several large collections in the hope that there will be some papers relevant to his research'.[9] Yet the name index in fact condemns the worker who is not at least partly a biographer to doing just that. To take a personal example, if I am interested in the phenomenon of bushranging in Tasmania, I can go into the Archives Office of Tasmania and into the Mitchell Library and seek to gather my data (a) by seeking in the catalogue or indexes the names of bushrangers known to me or of settlers who might have written on the subject, and (b) by seeking in the catalogue or indexes subject headings such as 'bushrangers', 'runaways', 'absconders' and so on. In the National Library I presume from its publishing practice and the doctrine expounded by Mr Powell, I shall be forced to rely solely on (a), hoping that such letters as I may find referring to my field of interest will refer to other persons whose names I can then check in the name indexes. Only if the researcher is a biographer or is dealing with a topic such as the views and activities of a known group of individuals—that is it partakes of the nature of biography to some extent—can the name index be considered anything like a satisfactory substitute for the subject index.

Beyond this feeling that Mr Powell is enunciating a policy based on financial necessity and seeking to justify it in other terms, I would seek to question the validity of the one major justification for the personal name index which he offers: 'Librarians have often reported that the most common request of historians is for letters written by particular people; for example, Berner has asserted that 90 per cent. of user requests for access to papers is by the users' linkage of proper names to the subjects of their interest.'[10] Without pretending to any rigorous evidence on the subject, but on the basis of ten years' experience in discussing with users their research topics and needs and of some comparison of experiences with colleagues, my reaction to

both parts of the quoted sentence is one of disbelief. I can accept that enquiries after letters written by particular people may outweigh any *single* subject enquiry, but that is not what is implied by the Berner citation.

I have not read the *Drexel Library Quarterly* in question[11] and do not known on what basis this quite staggering statistic is based, nor even whether Mr. Berner is still University Archivist, University of Washington, Seattle, as he was when the S.A.A. published its *Directory of Members* in 1970. I can therefore only conjecture that (if he is) the University of Washington draws to it an abnormally high proportion of people interested in biography and genealogy or perhaps that it possesses a collection which for some reason is particularly susceptible to this type of approach. There is, of course, another possible reason for this statistic, which might well apply to other institutions such as the National Library. That is, that because name indexes are easier, quicker, and cheaper to produce than subject indexes, more libraries produce them; that potential users approach such libraries with the usual preponderance of subject queries familiar to me and to my colleagues; that finding that there is no subject index or only a partial or rudimentary one are forced to use the only way open to them; that by one means or another having found a name or names connected with their subject, they enter the long laborious and inefficient task of pursuing that subject through the name index; and finally become a statistic showing that most people want name indexes.

In looking back over what I have so far said, I feel that I may well have given an impression of being unduly harsh in my comments. In returning to the particular question of the finding aids which I set out originally, to bring to the notice of those of my colleagues and those potential users of the National Library collections who might have been unaware of them, I would hasten to point out that I have not set out to castigate the publications themselves but rather some aspects of Library policy which I regard as mistaken. The Guides themselves I regard as very useful and competent productions—indeed they are publications which no major library, university history department or whatever should be without. The later ones are admirably consistent within the framework in which they were compiled and (with my reservations above about name indexes) I believe they will give at least as much assistance to the potential user in deciding whether he needs to use the material described and then to find individual items within it as anything else of the same scale which I have seen. I have only a couple of suggestions as to how they could be improved.

The first is that the earliest ones badly need to be updated, if the Banks guide is a fair sample. Second, the only listing of the guides appears in the booklet *Principal Manuscript Collections in the National Library of Australia* published in 1973 since when some 70 more have been published, and in the entries in the *Guide to Collections* where entries have been done for the *Guide* or updated subsequently to mention that the descriptive list is available. A less permanent listing of the major collections or of those for which detailed guides have been prepared issued each year (at least) would be far more valuable.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. *Archives and Manuscripts,* Vol. 6, No. 7, August 1976, pp.259-268.
2. *Ibid.,* pp.259-260.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Those to the papers of H. H. Richardson, Sir George Foster Pearce, L. F. Giblin, Dame Jean Macnamara and Kate Baker.
5. *Quaere:* Is this a pernicious practice?
6. Powell, *op. cit.,* pp. 266-267.
7. *Ibid.,* p.267.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid., p.264.*
10. *Ibid.,* p.267.
11. Vol. 11, 1975, pp.34-54.